

Attendance Policy

Aims of the Policy

This policy has been written to ensure that Biggin C of E Primary School is compliant with the guidelines established by the government relating to school attendance. This policy is intended to:

- foster a shared understanding of the importance of good attendance across the whole-school community;
- promote good attendance and punctuality;
- reduce unnecessary absences;
- address persistent absenteeism;
- establish protocols to ensure that attendance issues are addressed early and effectively;
- build effective working relationships with parents and carers to ensure that every child is accessing education.

Related Legislation and Guidance This policy meets the requirements of Working together to improve school attendance outlined by the Department for Education (DfE).

It is also based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (with subsequent amendments)
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 7)
- The Education Act 2002 (Part 3)
- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6)

When applying this policy, our school is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance is the responsibility of all members of the school community. However, we have allocated specific roles and responsibilities to named individuals to ensure that we are meeting statutory requirements.

Governors

Those responsible for governance at the school will:

- ensure that the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements;
- work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance;
- reinforce the importance of attendance in documentation and communications as appropriate;
- ensure that key staff receive relevant training relating to attendance;
- review and analyse attendance data and support leaders to address any issues that become apparent;
- offer appropriate challenge regarding attendance data;
- keep up to date with changes in guidance and legislation and ensure that leaders are aware of any changes;
- hold the headteacher to account for the effective implementation of this policy.

Headteacher

The headteacher will:

- take responsibility for the implementation of this policy;
- monitor school-level attendance and absence data and communicate key information and data to those responsible for governance;
- monitor the impact of any attendance strategies and systems that are in place, identifying new approaches where relevant;
- ensure that there are systems in place so that when a pupil has a social worker, they are informed about any unexplained absences;
- liaise with staff to identify when it would be appropriate to issue fixed penalty notices;

- decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Designated senior leader for attendance

It is expected that schools will have a designated senior leader for attendance. At our school, this person is Teresa Nicholls, Headteacher. They will:

- oversee attendance across the school;
- retain an oversight of attendance data across the school;
- foster a clear vision and expectations throughout the school community;
- identify and/or devise systems and interventions to improve attendance;
- arrange meetings with parents/carers to address attendance issues;
- consider instances where it would be appropriate to consider a fixed penalty notice.

The contact details for our designated senior leader are:

Teresa Nicholls

tnicholls@biggin.derbyshire.sch.uk

01298 84279

At Biggin C of E Primary School the Designated Senior Leader for Attendance will:

- monitor individual and group attendance on a day-to-day basis;
- gather information and produce reports relating to attendance as required ;
- work with education welfare officers and any other external partners to tackle attendance issues;
- deliver targeted interventions where a need has been identified;
- provide additional support for attendance in line with the school's policy on this.

Class teachers

Class teachers will:

- complete attendance registers at the times specified by the school using the school's agreed systems;
- use accurate attendance and absence codes as set out in Working together to improve school attendance;
- ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported using the school's agreed safeguarding systems and protocols.

Office staff

Office or school administration staff will:

- answer and record attendance-related phone calls from parents/carers;
- ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported using the school's agreed safeguarding systems and protocols.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers will:

- ensure that their child is in school each day, except for when a statutory reason applies;
- notify the school of their child's absence as soon as possible using the school's agreed systems;
- ensure that leave of absence is only requested in exceptional circumstances and, where possible, advance notice is given;
- book any non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day, where possible;
- engage with any support offered to address any barriers to their child's attendance.

Pupils

Pupils will:

- attend school punctually every day;
- attend all lessons on time;
- engage with any support offered by the school to help them overcome any barriers to attendance.

Protocols and Procedures

Recording attendance

In line with statutory requirements, we will keep a register of school attendance and ensure that the name of every pupil is entered onto the register, irrespective of whether they are of statutory school age or not.

The school will add pupils to the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which it has agreed with (or been notified by) the parent that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed starting day, the school will follow this up and establish the reason for absence.

Once a pupil is added to the admissions register, their attendance or absence will be recorded for each session. The register will take place at the start of the school day and also once during the second session. Codes recorded in the register will be in line with the guidelines set out in Section 8 of Working together to improve school attendance.

The school will also record:

- whether the absence is authorised or not (if the pupil is of compulsory school age);
- the nature of any off-site activity;
- any exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an absence.

Amendments to the attendance register

Clear and accurate records of amendments made to the attendance register will be kept. These will note:

- the original entry;
- the amendment that is being made;
- the reason for this amendment;
- the date that the amendment is being made;
- the name and position of the individual making the amendment.

Monitoring and analysing attendance

We monitor the attendance of our pupils so that we can identify any issues, concerns and patterns of absence. We use a range of systems to monitor absence on a daily, weekly, termly, half-termly and annual basis. We monitor the attendance of individuals, groups and cohorts, as well as looking at attendance patterns across the whole school.

The systems we use for monitoring attendance are the Admissions and Attendance Registers held electronically on RM Integris and its reporting and analysis functions.

We will use our monitoring data to identify any individuals, groups or patterns that are a cause for concern and then take measures to address these. This data will be used in discussions with families and when evaluating the impact of any attendance strategies that we implement.

Reporting to parents and carers

We understand the importance of keeping parents and carers informed about their child's attendance, as well as reminding them of the implications of poor attendance. Our systems for reporting attendance and absence to parents and carers are as follows:

- Phonecalls to parents and carers on the first day of absence if not reported beforehand;
- Follow-up phonecalls throughout the absence as required;
- meetings between school and parents and carers to discuss reasons behind poor attendance and to offer support as appropriate;

- Formal letters home to parents;
- Warning notices.

Strategies for promoting good attendance

We recognise the importance of promoting good attendance and making sure that pupils and their families understand the effect of poor attendance on their life chances.

The systems we use at Biggin C of E Primary School for promoting attendance are:

- Verbal recognition and praise;
- Information to parents on attendance levels on newsletters;
- Certificates for individuals.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

We recognise that every absence is unique so the school will consider whether to authorise an absence on a case-by-case basis.

The following will give a guide as to whether the absence is likely to be authorised.

Typical scenarios for authorised absences include:

- illness;
- emergency medical and dental appointments;
- religious observance for recognised religious holidays/festivals;
- a pupil taking part in a performance if the local authority has granted a licence for this;
- a pupil being suspended or excluded;
- a traveller absence where this is for occupational reasons;
- pupils on a temporary, part-time timetable, where this has been arranged by the school;
- bereavement (close friend or family member);

- study leave (where this has been approved by the school);
- other exceptional circumstances.

In the examples listed above, the school will still usually need to grant permission for the absence to be authorised.

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is for a reason that is deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

In the case of illness, the absence will usually be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness may not be authentic. In these instances, the school may ask for supplementary evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, medical report, etc. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If, after requesting evidence, the school is still not satisfied that the reason given is genuine, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents or carers will be informed of this.

Non-emergency appointments

We request that non-emergency medical and dental appointments are booked outside of the school day to minimise lost learning time. Where this is not possible, permission for absence should be sought in advance.

Punctuality

Pupils must arrive at school on time each day.

The morning register will open at 9.00 am and will be kept open until 9.15 am.

The register for the second session will open at 1.00 pm for Key Stage 2 until 1.15 pm and 1.15pm for Key Stage 1 and Reception until 1.30 pm.

Pupils arriving after the register opened but before the register is closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code; however, the arrival time will be noted to ensure that there is a clear record that the pupil is on site.

The school day ends at 3.30 pm.

Reporting absences

If a parent or carer needs to report an absence to the school, they should follow the agreed procedures as set out below:

·Telephone the school office on 01298 84279.

Parents or carers are requested to report all absences before 8.30 am each day or as soon as reasonably possible.

Requesting term-time absence

Requests for advanced approval of term-time absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents or carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time, unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Holidays taken in term time will rarely be authorised.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made to the school using our absence request form, which can be requested from the school office (01298 84279).

Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible and at least 5 days before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

Managing persistent and severe absence

We will identify and address instances of persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is defined as a pupil who is absent for 10% or more of scheduled sessions.

Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of scheduled sessions.

We will identify persistent and severe absence using the systems for monitoring and analysis as outlined above.

To respond to persistent and severe absence, the school will seek to identify and address root causes. As there are a wide range of reasons for this occurring, the response will be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, typical strategies will include:

- supporting the pupil and their family to understand the reasons that attendance is important and the possible implications of repeated absences;

- enhanced monitoring of individual pupils where attendance is (or could be) an issue;
- holding meetings with parents or carers to discuss concerns;
- offering specific pastoral support using the resources and staffing already available within the school;
- working with external partners to address the underlying factors that are causing the absence;
- issuing warning letters and fixed penalty notices.

Handling unexplained absences

If a pupil is absent from school without an explanation, the school will take the following steps to determine the whereabouts of the child and the reason for their absence:

- Phonecalls to parents and carers;
- Emails to parents and carers.

If, after repeated efforts to establish the circumstances around the child's absence, the school is still not able to establish this, the following steps will be taken in line with our safeguarding protocols:

- The absence would be reported to the Children Missing from Education team (CME).

Legal sanctions for addressing attendance issues

Schools, the police and local authorities have legal powers to fine parents or carers for unauthorised absences. These powers only exist where the child is of statutory school age.

Decisions on whether to issue a penalty are made after considering a number of factors, including:

- the number of unauthorised absences in the last [academic year/12-month period/other];
- one-off absences that have been taken without school permission, e.g. term-time holidays;

- whether an excluded or suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without good reason;
- whether there are exceptional circumstances that explain an absence that would usually be unauthorised.

Legal sanctions will only be pursued when the family concerned have been offered support and this has either been unsuccessful or the family have failed to engage.

If a parent or carer is issued with a fine or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days. If the fine is not paid promptly, this will rise to £120 within 28 days. This payment is made directly to the local authority. Instructions for payment will be given when the fine is issued. After 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to withdraw the notice or pursue a prosecution.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years. If there are any changes in legislation or government updates, the policy may need to be reviewed before the next scheduled update.

The policy will be reviewed by the headteacher and approved by the governing body].

Policy commenced: June 2024

Date of next scheduled review: June 2026